

## **Memorable Teacher Educators: perspective of novice teachers**

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**ABSTRACT – Memorable Teacher Educators: perspective of novice teachers.** There search presented here aims to recognize the characteristic components with which academic teacher educators considered memorable are meant, from the perspective of novice teachers of Basic General Education Pedagogy and History and Geography Pedagogy who studied at universities in the south central macrozone of Chile. From a qualitative study of an interpretive nature, results were obtained that show the configuration of four categories of analysis, which expose various characteristics that reveal the importance of the role of the trainer and its impact on the teaching staff. **Keywords: Teacher Educator. Novice Teachers. Teaching. Practices.**

**RESUMEN – Formadores de Profesores Memorables: perspectiva de docentes noveles.** La investigación que aquí se presenta tiene por objetivo reconocer los componentes característicos con que son significados los académicos formadores de profesores considerados memorables, desde la perspectiva de profesores noveles de Pedagogía en Educación General Básica y Pedagogía en Historia y Geografía que cursaron estudios en universidades de la macrozona centro sur de Chile. A partir de un estudio cualitativo de corte interpretativo, se obtuvo resultados que evidencian la configuración de cuatro categorías de análisis, las cuales exponen diversas características que revelan la importancia del rol del formador y su impacto en el profesorado.

**Palabras-clave: Formador de Profesores. Noveles. Enseñanza. Prácticas.**

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

At a global level, the professional teaching development, and, specifically, the initial formation of teachers is a topic that has gained importance as a key element to be addressed in public educational policies (Herrera-Seda, 2018; Vaillant, 2019). Nonetheless, empirical research and the analysis of the educational models present in academy and its diverse formation plans is still an emerging subject, that has not been deeply investigated (Vezub, 2013). Even though the research field has advanced on establishing which are the knowledge, abilities or skills that define a good teacher, there are still concerns regarding initial formation and who trains future teachers (Vezub, 2016), therefore, the need to bring a forgotten agent to light emerges, the teacher educator and their development as a teaching about teaching specialist (Russell et al, 2016).

The teacher educator academicians possess features which are vital to know (Cao et al., 2018), in order to understand how they influence teacher formation and how their characteristics may affect in diverse educational contexts when practicing pedagogy (Valbuena Duarte, 2018). A fundamental characteristic of that expertise is its dual level, teacher educators are teachers of teachers and their teaching subject is teaching (Kelchtermans et al., 2018). Therefore, to know the teacher educators' characteristics allows to identify the different methods, strategies and tools used, which is relevant from a political, sociological and educational point of view (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020).

In this context, this research proposes to investigate the aspects of those teacher educators that are deemed memorable, teachers that leave *footprints of good education* and that have become landmarks in the field because of their track record, their values and their professionalism, teachers that are remembered by their students, even after they graduate (Alvarez; Porta, 2012; Alvarez, Porta; Sarasa, 2010; Sarasa, 2012). Henceforth, the aim of this investigation is to recognize the characteristic components of teacher educator academicians that are deemed memorable from the perspective of novice General Basic Education Pedagogy and Pedagogy in History teachers that were trained in universities from the center-south macro zone of Chile.

## Teacher Education

College formation has been under discussion for over a decade, when Chilean universities began a restructuring process as a consequence of the Declaration of Valparaiso in 2003, which prompted the convergence of the higher education system with the principles of the Declaration of Bolonia, this is; a common framework of teaching and learning, harmonization of the curricular design, the deployment of transferable credits and the acknowledgment of academic qualifications (Rojas; Soto, 2016).

Initial teacher formation has been installed as one of the central and strategic axes of the Chilean education agenda, thereby, teacher education is recognized as a key factor for the achievement of teachers' learning and for the improvement of the educational system in general (Valdés; Turra, 2017). In this regard, and to ensure quality on initial formation, it was established that accreditation for the pedagogy programs would be compulsory (National Council of Accreditation, 2018).

Pedagogy students are trained by college professors, professionals that accompany the future teachers for many years. The relationship that is generated between the pedagogy student and the educator academic is relevant for the acquisition of significant learning, from a construction in which the experiences in the educational labor field and the transmission of the pedagogic knowledge built on practice are valued (Turra-Díaz; Flores-Lueg, 2019). Teacher educator academicians that possess features which are vital to know, analyze and innovate on their own practices, incorporating approaches centered on the learning of all students (Garcia-Gonzalez et al., 2018), to understand how it could influence teacher education and how their characteristics may affect diverse educational contexts.

## **Teacher Educators**

Professional training of teacher educators is a topic that has not been largely investigated, moreover, the interest and emphasis of investigators and professionals in arguing that teacher educators must be treated as a specific category of professionals, begins a couple of decades ago (Kelchtermans et al., 2018).

The teacher is trained by college academicians that give their lectures on pedagogy and from whom are expected investigations related to their role; however, there are scarce studies by teacher educator academicians within the field (Cao et al., 2018) despite them being one of the main agents in the training of the pedagogy student.

Cochran-Smith et al. (2020) wrote a paper in which they analyzed the characteristics of teacher educators in four different countries: New Zealand, Israel, Norway and the US, which vary considerably in terms of their historical, geopolitical and political context. Despite the relative lack of attention on teacher educators, the authors described an interesting aspect, this is, the wide participation of college teacher educators in professional research and/or self-learning of teacher educators was double: firstly, to explore new strategies and practices that produce new ideas on teacher education in order to learn how to teach in local environments, and secondly, to extend their findings beyond the local context through the conceptualization of new strategies, interpretations, frameworks, models or theories that might be useful out of the local setting.

The evaluation of the study conducted by Cochran-Smith et al. (2010) showed that, in all four countries, it is assumed that the quality of the teachers is relevant to improving the country's educational sys-

tem and that the way the teachers are prepared is a central factor in the teacher's quality. In all four countries there are projects, innovations, programs, policies and/or varied developments. However, the authors suggest that in none of these countries exists an integral and deliberate approach for teacher educators' education that simultaneously recognizes the variety of *types* of teacher educators, which go from college lecturers to college practice supervisors.

As for Chile, of the teacher educator's features study, it is acknowledged that it is a pending topic, seen as an individual responsibility, distant from what it means to be a teacher nowadays (Contreras, 2014). At a college level there is no specific regulation of the characteristics that a teacher educator must have in order to teach in college. Conversely, there is a strong tension regarding the functions that this educator must comply: to investigate, to dictate classes, to communicate their creations and interact with the environment, among others, along with teaching with a good cultural base, which forces a critical model of teaching education to possess an optimal, practical and experiential theoretical base (Torres-Santome, 2019).

## Methodology

This research was developed from a qualitative interpretative approach, understood as a process of comprehending the meanings of the subjects (Erickson, 1997). The search was to identify the teacher educators deemed memorable and know their characteristics, through an open survey that explored a special group's synthesis (Gordon, 1994). The open survey as a data collection technique provides an important service in the qualitative research, as an exploring procedure of ideas and general beliefs about some aspect of reality delivered in writing (Rodríguez Bresque et al., 2011).

The data analysis emanated from the qualitative analysis of the content, technique that allows the reduction of the messages' complexity. This analysis procedure does a thorough search for what the text unveils, managing to shape the meaning expressed by the participants in shorter formulations (Kvale, 2011), thus, it generates brief syntagms, utilizes codes and groups meaningful categories.

The study was conducted in the Chilean college system, specifically with novice teachers of General Basic Education Pedagogy and Pedagogy in History programs, teachers that had two or three years of experience exercising the teaching profession (Calvo; Camargo Abello, 2015), trained in universities of the south-central macro zone of Chile that are ascribed to the Exclusive Admission System of the Chilean Universities' Rector Council.

The participation in this study was absolutely voluntary and confidential. In order to fulfil the ethical aspects, an informed consent was used, which was handed to every one of the participants, who approved of being part of this research.

## Results

The characteristic components with which teacher educators deemed memorable are meant, from novice teachers of Basic General Education Pedagogy (NPGB) and Pedagogy in History (NPHG), are organized in four categories: i) teaching role model; ii) the project high expectations onto their students; iii) organized and diverse teaching; and, iv) they promote critical and reflexive thinking.

### *Teaching role model*

In the interviewee's speech, the novice teachers' positive perception regarding memorable academicians stands out, highlighting personal characteristics related to a series of qualities that the teachers possess, which translates into conceiving the memorable academicians as a teaching role model. The empathy that these academicians show is emphasized by various novice teachers, which shows the capacity to understand what the other is living, in this case, empathy is referred, among other things, to active listening, comprehension and emotional support for their pedagogy students:

I highlight the empathy, that they are people that are open to dialogue, to share our points of view and that are good people (NPGB-U1-5). Empathy, respect for personal features and concern for having a good relationship with their students (NPHG-U3-4). Their interest was that we could learn and generated a nice environment in the classroom (NPHG-U3-4).

Another characteristic that novice teacher attribute to memorable academicians is that they dedicate time to their students, which means that they have an attention schedule assignation and permanent availability for clearing doubts or deepen the contents, making a close relationship between the teacher/student which goes beyond the academy:

Something very important, the dedication for each student and the time they found to be able to explain better (NPGB-U2-3). The distinction lies in the time and dedication they give to students, not only in class, but the time for doubts, conversations about some academic topic and the opportunities that they give beyond de classroom, acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses, work that, as an educator, is fundamental with the time that college professors have (NPHG-U3-2).

Besides, the interviewed teachers outlined that the learning the memorable academicians gave in their training was motivating, considering them as an example to follow and a teaching role model to replicate in their own practices:

They are so lucid that, even though the years pass you remember what they did, how they did it and what they said and many times you replicate those methods, they become examples (NPGB-U2-2). You center your learning process, not only looking like, but being an example and a model teacher" (NPHG-U3-2). I highlight that they were responsible with their work, that, somehow, they were an example for us (NPGB-U1-5). It

generated an attachment and compromise to be there, listen to them and learn not only history, education or geography, but also learn from their example (NPHG-U2-3).

Within the teaching practices that novice teachers highlight and perceive that they obtained important learnings from memorable academicians, was to incorporate the significant learning as a base for teaching, they highlight the richness of this learning and the positive effects that relapse in the students:

The proficiency of the contents approached in their classes and the preparation of these is evident, they are willing to be different by generating significant learning (NPGB-U1-2). It is essential that they know how to pass the knowledge down generating significant learning, not only being an adept, but having effective teaching and teaching backing methods (NPHG-U3-2).

Finally, all the memorable academicians' positive characteristics according to the perfection of novice teachers means that memorable academicians transferred the passion for teaching, which was synonym of motivation and enthusiast to attend classes leaving a footprint in the training of novice teachers.

### *They project high expectations onto students*

Among the characteristics that novice teachers attribute to a memorable academic, there is the generating high expectations for their students, considering them change agents in education:

Showing high expectations for their students, believing that they will make changes that will have a positive impact in their future students (NPGB-U1-1). They inculcated values and taught to reflect on our practices, always searching to be the best professionals that push us and have high expectations for their students (NPGB-U1-4).

Additionally, memorable academicians motivate newly graduate teachers to continue to perfect themselves in order to be the best teachers, with more knowledge and tools to help their students, "they show high expectations about future teachers and they urge them to keep perfecting themselves" (NPGB-U1-1).

High expectations promoted by memorable educators to novice teachers is due to the close relationship that they forged through the teaching training. Novice teachers remember about their student years how memorable academicians supported them in their transition in college inside and outside the classroom, humanizing pedagogy, "[...] closeness and importance that they showed in each one of the courses and also outside of the classroom, since many focus only on dictating their lecture and meet the schedule, however, there are those who make the difference by humanizing pedagogy" (NPHG-U3-3); college professors that "[...] are not arrogant because of the position they are in" (NPGB-U2-4). Novice teachers consider, thus, that one of the characteristics of memorable academicians is that they project high expectations onto

their students and incorporate their students' emotions, generating a bond that goes beyond learning.

### *Organized and diverse teaching*

The next category accounts for the way that memorable academicians organize teaching, using diverse learning strategies according to each moment, this way, promoting students' participation in class and a better knowledge delivery.

One of the teaching practices that novice teachers recognize of memorable academicians, is the way they organize contents, since they define it as methodic teaching, which could be shown in the planning of each class:

They are organized, structured classes, it did not seem as if there were improvisation or that it was just an exposition (NPHG-U3-4); their preparation is notorious, this means that the most important educators prepare the content and complementary material needed for the lecture (NPHG-U3-1). They are super careful with planning (NPHG-U2-4). I highlight the way they presented and planned the content at the beginning of each semester and that it was fulfilled (NPGB-U1-7).

By organizing the semester, novice teachers remember to value the fact that the academic gave the chance to review and propose changes in the planning, and attitude that is highlighted and positively remembered:

Some are suggested and then the decisions are made together, without affecting anybody and paying attention to the majority, educators promote students' dialogue and interaction, taking their ideas in (NPGB-U1-1). In general, I could characterize their teaching style as based in a balance between explanation and dialogue, always willing to take and use the contributions that the students made in class (NPHG-U3-4).

Besides, novice teachers point out that memorable academicians use diverse strategies and learning styles, promoting that students learn through participation, stating that they differentiate from the rest of the academic through these characteristics:

They are proactive in teaching and they promote student's active participation in building their learning, through debates, investigations, conversations about educational practices, among others (NPGB-U1-2). There is a total management of the educational endeavor- disciplinary-methodological – instrument planning – evaluation, the stamp is integral in comparison with other educators, many do not cover all the areas mentioned (NPHG-U2-4).

Together with the diverse learning strategies that memorable academicians use, there are also the dynamics with which they gave their classes. Among the different methods that memorable academicians used, we found promoting creativity, team work and alternative methods for achieving every student's learning. To all the novice teachers, memorable academicians use these teaching styles that encourage the

formative process, which brought positive experiences because they knew different methods for applying contents:

The style and method of sending readings and aligning the formative process or the class to said readings, I also remember having that kind of teachers in my initial formation, although the process was not that intentional, I highlight that at least the classes and readings had a clear north and coherence, just as I pointed out previously (NPHG-U2-3).

In the narrative of novice teachers, it is highlighted the positive valorization that they attribute to the fact that memorable academicians adjust the contents to the diverse types of learning that every student has. Therefore, they recognize them as empathic educators and worried that their students could respond to the challenges of the educational system, incorporating current topics within their classes, “[...] they worry and show interest for knowing their students, they are flexible, empathic” (NPGB-U1-1).

Another aspect that novice teachers point out is the great proficiency memorable academicians possess, which is an important element since it motivates learning, and teachers with wide knowledge of the subjects that promote their students’ participation are formed, “[...] which distinguishes a memorable academic is in the first place their wisdom regarding the knowledge that they possess and the way of delivering them” (NPGB-U1-7).

During the classes that the memorable educators gave, the contents received feedback, verifying the weaknesses and strengths that every one of their students has in order to generate a significant learning. These moments of feedback during class also serve as help to resolve doubts and clarify the contents that are studied in each class, so some novice teachers point out the importance of an “[...] integral accompaniment in learning, attention and work follow up, moments of feedback ensured to reflect on the practices” (NPHG-U3-2); thus, “[...] monitoring the acquisition of learnings and give constant feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses that appear” (NPGB-U1-1).

### *They promote critical and reflective thinking*

The reflective thinking that memorable educators encourage in novice teachers is based on the compromise that every student would learn the contents and could use them in their daily life. The way of incorporating reflection within classes allowed that novice teachers rethink the teaching processes, adapting them to the rhythms and needs of every student. One of the ways in which memorable educators incorporate reflection is through practical team work analyzing the information seen in class:

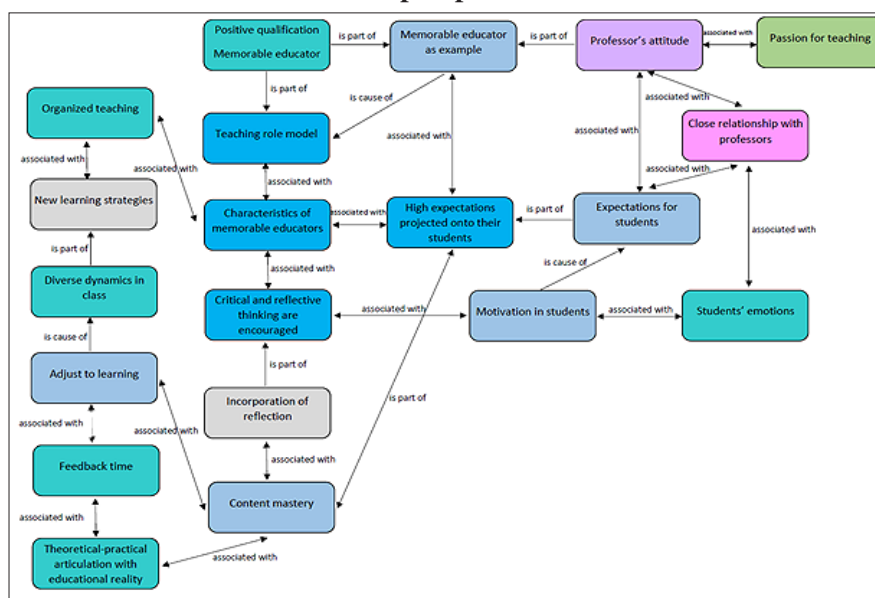
The teaching practices that I recognize in those memorable academicians are the implementation of practical team works that require investigation, reflection and data analysis from diverse sources (NPGB-U1-1). Associating theory and practice transversally in class (NPHG-U2-1).



Critical thinking seeks to train teachers so that they have an opinion, questioning the elements that they learn. This characteristic of memorable academicians is highlighted by novice teachers and they consider it a positive assessment, “the great majority was characterized by enhancing critical learning, with an active participation from those who had previous knowledge and those who did not” (NPHG-U3-3), recognizing “those practices where they presented classes and cases, with a reflective format that forced us to develop critical thinking, to improve pedagogic classes” (NPGB-U1-4).

The summary of the findings made in this research is represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Characteristics of teacher educators deemed memorable from the perspective of novice teachers**



Source: Self made.

## Discussion

The learnings these teacher educator academicians give is an education that stays in time, this has been demonstrated in this research by working with novice teachers, school system teachers that graduated about three years ago from college and that remember their educators through their main characteristics. This proves to us the importance that, in teacher formation, the key role of the teacher educator is taken into account, seeing it as an educator that passes their characteristics down to their students, because from their teaching and formative experience and their lectures, they teach contents and, at the same time, a positive attitude that might be replicable in their students.

From the results, we can say that the teacher educator possesses characteristics that move about their pedagogic, humane and ideological abilities, emphasizing their actions at all times in and from learning, through a teaching process thought for the teacher in training (Merellano-Navarro et al., 2016), features that make an integral professional known and that transcends beyond pedagogy or the subject's disciplinary scope. The teacher educator deemed memorable "[...] fully manages the content of the learning results that they hope to achieve in their students" (Jerez Yañez et al., 2015, p. 503), gives clear and orderly explanations, where the mastery of the subject is notorious in a participative dynamic (Casero, 2010), an educator that prepares their lectures with great interest in what they are teaching.

Proximity with their students is a fundamental element, "[...] a good educator is that who, among other things, maintains a good relationship with their students" (Casero, 2010, p.231), it gives relevance to matters linked to knowledge, experiences, and hand their knowledge over through didactic strategies. Relevant and primary aspects in good teacher's performance, because it is not only about having knowledge, it is not enough to know the subject, but learning to design and use teaching didactic strategies that enable learning (Fernandez-Borro; Gonzalez-Losada, 2012), thus, to think of students while preparing classes in order to use the best teaching strategies.

Henceforth, teacher educator academics evoke interest in students' learning from respect and consideration, showing justice and coherence when designing the evaluation and review criteria for it (Casero, 2010). These characteristics allow the articulation of knowledge arising from professional and disciplinary formation of college professors, with experiences built throughout their professional career (Merellano-Navarro et al., 2016).

As explained, memorable educators possess diverse characteristics that distinguish them, "[...] they achieve great success when helping their students learn, act and feel" (Bain, 2004, p.15), teachers committed to their students, who manage to impact the lives of every one of them, consequently, their research allows us to know the building processes and how they can impact generations of students (Gajardo-Asbún, 2019).

## Conclusions

It is recognized that the teacher educator academic must possess an array of knowledge about educational endeavor, in a way that allows us to develop their formative practice in a thoughtful and contextualized manner, helping to get a better understanding of learning focused on what it means to be a teacher and their contribution to a reflection about the role of teachers in society.

The research about college professors is relevant, knowing the characteristics of academicians deemed memorable is a contribution to teacher formation in all areas, and it is meaningful for the changes

hoped to make in education, because they are inspiring teachers, and it is hoped to learn from them about content mastery and suitable strategies for each situation.

Systematic, critical and collaborative thinking about teaching practices in college education, will give their students a guide on what for and how to do it, and, at the same time, it can contribute to the educators community through new knowledge on how to teach how to learn to teach.

The characteristic features identified in this research expose how important it is that the teacher educator shows earnest to their students, being an example for them and projecting high expectations onto their formation processes. Along with this, the encouragement of critical thinking has been valued by novice teachers, who recognize it as a main factor in teaching education and that is linked to the changes that teachers might make in the school system.

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